



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Nez-Lizer focus on water, electricity, and road infrastructure for Navajo Utah communities

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer met with San Juan County Commissioners Willie Grayeyes and Kenneth Maryboy, Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr., and Navajo Mountain Chapter President Hank Stevens on Thursday, to plan and strategize for the development of a new highway that will connect the communities of Navajo Mountain and Oljato to provide a new shorter route for many local residents and create new community and economic development opportunities.

President Nez said that if the current dirt road is paved it would provide a new improved route for many Navajo residents in the area and for thousands of tourists that visit Monument Valley and other nearby attractions every year. Currently, commuters must drive over 100-miles through the communities of Shonto and Kayenta to get from one community to the other.

“Through the partnership of the Navajo Nation, the state of Utah, and San Juan County, I’m confident that we can construct this highway that would serve as a critical corridor for tourism to help create jobs, businesses, and revenues, and to serve local community members,” said President Nez.

According to Navajo Nation Division of Transportation Executive Director Garret Silversmith, the highway would stretch 30 miles near the Utah-Arizona border. He added that the initial cost estimate indicates that it will cost approximately \$115 million to construct the new highway, which would include drainage improvements, construction of bridges, new pavement, signage,



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer meeting with San Juan County, Utah Commissioners, Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr., and other officials at the Office of the President and Vice President in Window Rock, Ariz. on Jan. 29, 2020.

right-of-way fencing, and more. The Nation continues to seek additional sources of funding to leverage its resources through matching funds and other contributions.

The San Juan County Commissioners and Navajo Mountain Chapter President Hank Stevens spoke in support of the project, stating that paving of the road has been a high priority for many community members for years.

“Anything that the Office of the President and Vice President can do to move this project forward, we are willing to lend our support and get it done for the people in those communities and of course to promote the ‘Buy Navajo, Buy Local’ initiative as well,” stated Vice President Lizer.

In regards to other infrastructure needs for Navajo Utah residents, President Nez and Vice President Lizer met with Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert’s Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Mower, Special Counsel on Indian Affairs Larry Echohawk, and the Executive Director of the Utah Navajo Trust Fund Board of Trustees Tony Dayish on Jan. 22, to discuss options to deliver much-needed water and electricity lines for 26 Navajo families residing in a 120-acre area known as the Westwater Subdivision, near Blanding, Utah, which was purchased by the Navajo Nation in 1986.

According to NTUA, the 26 families in the Westwater Subdivision are among a total of 99 Navajo families in Utah that are not yet funded to receive electricity. However, NTUA has begun work with Rocky Mountain Power in Utah to bring three-phase power to the 26 families. The cost estimate for the three-phase distribution line up to the Westwater Subdivision is \$905,000, which includes the right-of-way, design and engineering, materials and construction of the power line.

In April, NTUA will begin its “Light Up Navajo II” project with the goal of electrifying as many as 300 homes for Navajo families, with potentially up to 30 families in the state of Utah.

President Nez and the Utah officials said they are committed to securing funding including funds from the Utah Navajo Trust Fund to connect water and power lines for Navajo families. The Office of the President and Vice President will continue to meet with the Governor’s Office, Utah Navajo Trust Fund Board of Trustees, NTUA, and other entities to move the projects forward.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer, Utah Governor’s Office staff, and Utah Navajo Trust Fund Board of Trustees officials in Window Rock, Ariz. on Jan. 22, 2020.

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